



Writing Skills

Public information
And Emergency Management



Forms of News Writing

- Statements
- News releases
- Fact sheets
- Bios
- Backgrounders
- One-pagers
- Media Advisories
- Opinion piece
- Speech
- Presentations



The AP Stylebook

The #1 resource for newswriting

A guide to:

- Language usage, grammar, and punctuation
- Reference books for terms and definitions
- Approved abbreviations
- Word and numerical usage
- Internet search techniques and language
- Language to avoid



Statements

Press statements **are not** news releases

- Normally only a few paragraphs
- Usually attributed to high-ranking official or authority
- May be used to counter contrary view or misinformation
- May be used to offer words of encouragement to victims



Opinion piece or Op-Ed

Opinion pieces are generally opinion essays published opposite the editorial page. They help legitimize your cause and you as a knowledgeable spokesperson for it.

Writing an opinion piece for publication

- Find out how long it should be
 - 500 words, 1000 words
- Determine the style it should be written in
- How should it be submitted



News Releases

News releases are the most commonly written PIO tool

A news release is:

- Formally structured
- Print ready
- A 1 – 2 page information-based document

Use a news release to tell your story

- The issue
- What you are doing
- What they need to know
- What's next



Timely News Release

A timely release of information from your agency :

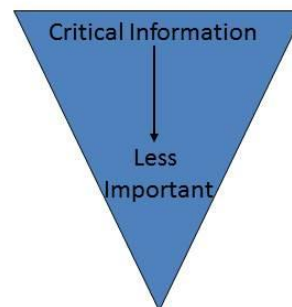
- Shows you are in control
- Shows you are effectively managing the incident
- Establishes the PIO presence
- Establishes the facilitation of information to the media



News Release Content

A news release is written in newspaper style from the perspective of your agency

- The lead sentence tells who, what, when, where, why, and how (5 W's + 1) as much as possible
- The second sentence supports the lead sentence, includes any information you could not fit into the lead, and is sometimes a quote
- Each subsequent sentence and paragraph is written in descending order of importance





News Release Format

Format guidelines (hard copy) include:

- Double spaced
- 2" margins
- One side of 8.5" x 11" paper

At the top of the page:

- Use letterhead or type the name of your agency
- Identify the contact person, title, and phone number for your agency
- Identify release date or "For immediate release"



News Release Format

- The body of the copy begins with the town from which the release originates in parenthesis, then the body of the release

For example:

“(Tallahassee, FL) The Governor announced today...”

- At the bottom of the first page indicate if this is the end of the release or if there is more information:

For example:

“-END-” or “-MORE-” or “-PAGE 1 of 2-”



Summary on News Releases

News Releases should:

- Be Timely
- Be Newsworthy
- Capture key points of an issue
- Give contact for follow-up
- Follow recognized format



Media Packets

- Resource for the media to help you get your message out
- Example Media Packet may contain:
 - List of Media Packet Contents
 - Information on Organization
 - Quick Facts / Key Messages
 - Media Release
 - Graphics /Photos / Video clips / Maps
 - Backgrounder/Summary/Brochure
 - Frequently asked questions/answers or “What ifs”
 - Speaker Bios if used for News Conference, etc.
 - Contact List and/or Business card.....usually contained in a folder (use both sides to advantage)



Speeches

Purposes of a speech:

- Main purpose is to impart information to an audience
- Explains an incident, program, policy, hazard or option
- Is instructional or informative in nature



Speech-Writing and Public Speaking

- A speech can serve a motivational purpose
- It can persuade the audience to take a specific action
- It can persuade the audience to change an attitude, behavior or opinion
- To be effective it must be clearly organized and easy to understand



Speech structure

3 parts to writing a speech

- Introduction –
 - Establishes rapport with audience
 - Shows how topic relates to them and why they need to know it
- Content section or body –
 - Comprises 80-90% of the speech
 - 3-5 points with supporting facts and examples
- Has a closing –
 - Is strong, like the opening
 - Summarizes the main points of your speech



Speeches and Public Speaking

A speech is written for the spoken word – not the printed word

- The standard rules of grammar do not always apply to this style of writing
- After a speech is written, it should be **read out loud** to see how it sounds



Speeches – A summary

- Writing your speech
 - Think about your purpose
 - Analyze your audience
 - Decide on your topic
 - Do some preliminary research
 - Talk out what you know
 - Do more research
- Have an introduction, body, and conclusion
- Suggested time limit is 10-15 minutes
- Approximately 100 words equal 1 minute



Emergency Management Presentations

In an emergency, there are 3 likely types of presentations you may need to develop and deliver:

- Persuasive
 - Have the public accept ideas or act
 - Show examples, lines of reasoning that lead to a conclusion
- Informational
 - Inform the public
 - Show how events have developed, provide more details
- Progress Report
 - Update knowledge
 - Use chronological or order of importance



Developing Presentations

When developing presentations, you should consider:

- Content
 - Determined by audience needs and time allowed
 - Researched thoroughly
- Style
 - Formal
 - Visual needs
 - Informal
- Structure
 - Introduction, Main body, and Conclusion



Developing EM Presentations

- Describe the risk situation
- Describe how the risk affects the community
- Discuss what your organization is doing to alleviate the risk situation
- Discuss how citizens can help themselves
- Discuss how citizens can assist your organization and obtain additional information
- Select materials to support the presentation, such as slides, graphics, and/or exhibits, to hold the audience's attention
- Practice, practice, practice!



Organize Your Information

- Identify the key points of your presentation
- Create an outline
 - Start with main topics
 - Add subtopics and details
- Only provide detailed explanations of important and difficult points



Visuals enhancements

- Using visuals to enhance your speech or presentation can be a strong re-enforcer
- Make sure the audience can see the visuals
- Make sure the equipment necessary to run your visuals is tested before your presentation



Presentations – a summary

- Keep it concise – generally 10-15 minutes
- Do not read the slides
- Provide added value
 - Handouts, supporting material